

IN THE CLAIM

Please amend claim 1, to read as follows:

1. (Amended) A process for producing a fine tungsten carbide powder, comprising the steps of:

(a) mixing an aqueous ammonium tungstate solution with a carbon powder in a proportion to reduce and carburize ammonium tungstate to form a slurry,

(b) drying the slurry to prepare a precursor,

613 (c) subjecting the precursor to a reduction and carburization by heating to a temperature, at which a reduction and carburization proceeds, in a non-oxidizing gas atmosphere to form a reduced and carburized product,

(d) mixing the reduced and carburized product with a carbon powder in a proportion required to carburize a W_2C component and/or a W component in the reduced and carburized product into WC, and

(e) subjecting the reduced and carburized product mixed with the carbon powder to a carburization by heating to a temperature, at which a carburization proceeds, in a hydrogen atmosphere.

IN THE ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

614 A process is provided for producing a fine tungsten carbide powder, which comprises the steps of drying a slurry, which is obtained by mixing an aqueous ammonium tungstate solution with a carbon powder, at low temperature, to form a precursor, mixing a reduced and carburized product, which is obtained by reducing and oxidizing the precursor in a non-oxidizing gas, with a carbon powder in a proportion required to substantially carburize the entire tungsten component into tungsten carbide (WC), and carburizing the mixture; and a high-performance fine tungsten carbide powder produced by the process, which has an average particle size of 0.8 μm or less and is free of a coarse power having a particle size of more than 1